

SERVICE CENTER UPDATE

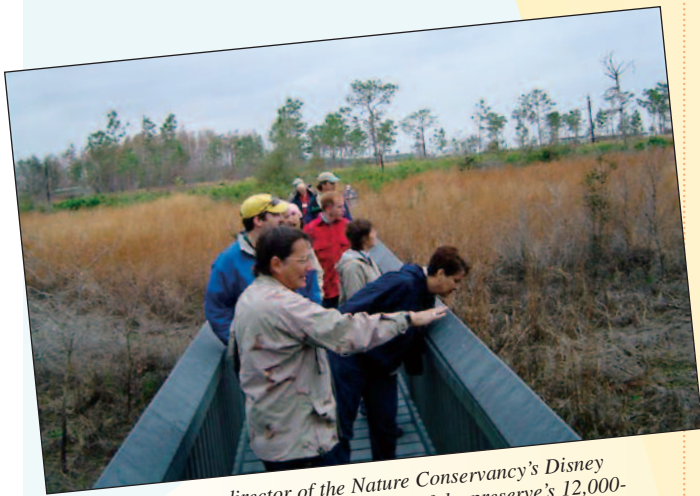
Spotlight on Service Centers



Orlando Service Center

Local leaders field experience

Launched six years ago, "Welcome to Your Watershed" was a two-day program in partnership with The Nature Conservancy to introduce local leaders and senior local government staff to issues surrounding water management, ecosystem restoration and environmental regulatory programs. To date, more than 200 participants have completed the seminar.



Carlos de la Rosa, director of the Nature Conservancy's Disney Wilderness Preserve, shows off a portion of the preserve's 12,000-acre landscape during the first presentation of Florida Watersheds, A Primer for Decision Makers. The Orlando Service Center and A Primer for Decision Makers. The Orlando Service Center and Nature Conservancy teamed up to offer the one-day course for central Florida leaders.

To encourage even greater participation, the curricula has been compressed into a dynamic single-day program. Now titled "Florida Watersheds: A Primer for Decision Makers," the one-day seminar continues to take its participants into the field to witness the unspoiled setting of Lake Russell on Reedy Creek, wetland restoration work in progress, the practice of water conservation and the unique issues associated with development that predates modern environmental permitting efforts. The next workshop will be offered March 18.

For information about the program, contact the Orlando Service Center at (407) 858-6100, Ext. 3806, or the Nature Conservancy at (407) 935-0002, Ext. 125.

Okeechobee Service Center

Unwrapping smiles at Real Life Children's Ranch

District staff and the Lake Okeechobee Interagency Team combined efforts to provide holiday gifts for the 29 boys and girls living at the Real Life Children's Ranch in Okeechobee. In addition to the District, the Interagency Team is made up of representatives from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service, and a number of private stakeholders in the area.

Real Life Children's Ranch has been in operation since 1957 and provides long-term residential care and treatment to abused, neglected, or abandoned children without regard to race, creed or religion. This organization provides a loving home and care for these children in need, existing solely on donations. Each child received a number of gifts from their wish list, as well as clothes, shoes and school supplies. Contributions totaled almost \$3,000.

Florida Keys Service Center

District encourages "green" lifestyle

The District is sponsoring the Florida Keys Green Living & Energy Expo on March 12-13 in Tavernier at the Coral Shores High School. The free event is dedicated to demonstrating sustainable living through ideas and technologies that promote renewable energy and water and energy conservation. The Expo will feature 30 workshops on renewable energy, alternative building methods, energy-efficient architectural design, green lodging, hybrid vehicles, clean boating, and promoting sustainable government. You can find more information online at www.keysglee.com.

Lower West Coast Service Center

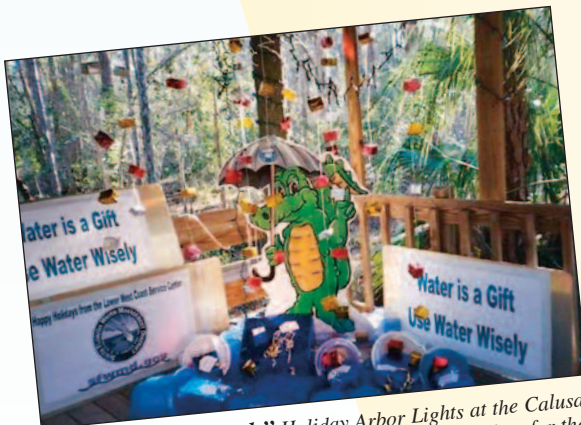
New trails open to the public

Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed (CREW) Land and Water Trust, a public-private partnership is celebrating its 15th anniversary with a series of events. On Jan. 8, CREW celebrated the opening of new trails at Popash Slough and Marsh Boardwalk. Since its founding in 1989, the CREW Trust, with the District as a valued partner, has purchased 27,000 acres of wetlands and uplands vital to recharging groundwater in southwest Florida.

The trails are open to the public. For information about hiking, bird watching and events such as the Wildflower Weekend, March 18 and 19, visit www.crewtrust.org



Back Row: Ayounga Riddick, FFWCC biologist; Fred Davis, SFWMD Land Stewardship Director; Ellen Lindblad, Director, CREW Land & Water Trust; and Bill Hammond, former SFWMD Governing Board Member. Front Row: Jacque Rippe, SFWMD Lower West Coast Service Center Director; Samantha Cooper; Chelsea Nagel; Doty Brown, CREW Trustee; and Jim Goodwin, SFWMD Senior Environmental Analyst, join in the ribbon-cutting for the new boardwalk and Popash Slough Trail opening.



Freddy "Plugged." Holiday Arbor Lights at the Calusa Nature Center in Fort Myers was a holiday fundraiser for the nature center, museum and planetarium during December 2004. More than 4,500 viewed this lighted display promoting water conservation of Freddy the Friendly Alligator in a "shower" of gifts. The event raised \$40,000 and resulted in 141 new memberships to the Nature Center.



St. Lucie River Issues Team representatives are presented with \$4 million from the state for 2005 projects: (from left) Mary Murphy, Director, FDEP Port St. Lucie Office; Mark Perry, Director, Florida Oceanographic Society; Don Donaldson, County Engineer, Martin County; Kevin Henderson, Director, St. Lucie River Initiative; Bonnie Wolff, FDACS; Emilio Sosa, FWC/FMRI; Pete Stoffella, Univ. of FL/IFAS; Karen Smith, Director, SFWMD Martin/St. Lucie Service Center; and Don West, Public Works Director, St. Lucie County.

Martin/St. Lucie Service Center

Check it out: St. Lucie River Issues Team receives \$4 million for 2005 projects

Since 1999, the St. Lucie River Issues Team has helped local governments take the necessary steps to improve the quality of water entering the St. Lucie Estuary and Indian River Lagoon, protecting and improving the health of the unique ecosystem. To date, the Issues Team has funded over 76 projects throughout Martin and St. Lucie counties, totaling more than \$65 million. And this year is no exception to the program's continued success. This past October, the Issues

Team was presented with \$4 million from the South Florida Water Management District through the Florida Legislature for 2005 projects such as stormwater retrofits, agricultural and urban best management practices, habitat restoration and research.

Broward Service Center

Land stewardship focus at Envirothon, Discover Natural Florida Expo

The Broward Service Center and Fort Lauderdale Field Station participated in the Broward County Envirothon 2005 held Jan. 12 at the Hugh Taylor Birch State Park. District staffers Tammy Moore and Craig VanAuken worked with the youth to explain the importance of being good stewards of our natural resources and environmentally aware of our surroundings.

The District participated in a Discover Natural Florida Expo Jan. 9 at the Fern Forest Nature Center in Fort Lauderdale. More than 100 visitors interested in recreation opportunities in the natural setting attended and learned about District lands and land stewardship.